A Few Last Tips

Here is a brief list to help you avoid some common pitfalls and make the most of your water efficient garden:

1. Check sun/shade conditions. Sun patterns vary with time of day and year.

2. Evaluate soil and improve if necessary. Soil types can vary even within a given site. An analysis based on random soil sampling can provide information for plant selection and soil amendments. If appropriate, natural soil amendments or compost can improve root development, water penetration, and retention. Remember to improve the soil before planting or installing an irrigation system.

3. Promote good drainage. Excess moisture in the root zone increases occurrence of disease and pest infestations and promotes root rot.

4. Follow proper planting techniques. When planting, space new plants based upon mature size and shape. Even drought-tolerant plants, when new, need a good consistent supply of water to get started. Once established in the soil, watering can be reduced.

5. Don't overwater! Use a soil probe or your finger to check for soil moisture below the surface. The soil in the root zone can be moist even when the surface appears dry.

6. Consider the relationship among plants based upon their mature sizes and shapes.

7. A garden or yard is personal, so select plants to display colors, foliage, and flowers that appeal to you. Foliage, bark, and flower contrast and seasonal change add beauty to your water efficient landscape.

For more information on water efficient landscaping please contact your local conservation district or UC Extension (Master Gardeners chapter).

Special thanks to the UC Davis Arboretum, Master Gardeners, and the UC Davis Herbarium.

USDA NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service

Master Gardener

Backyard Conservation *It'll grow on you.*

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Water Efficient Landscaping

Getting Started

Water is just one component of your landscape planning–but in the arid west, it's an extremely important component. Planning for water efficiency in your landscape design not only helps the environment, it also helps you avoid unnecessary headaches and heartaches over foiled plantings and disappointing designs.

More than half of the water consumed by an average household is used for landscaping. In the summer months water use can increase by 250%, the majority of which goes for outdoor watering. Xeriscaping, a practice based on designing an attractive, sustainable landscape that minimizes water use and sound horticultural principles, is one possible solution to this problem.

Xeriscape is coined from the Greek word Xeros, which means dry. But unlike the dry unattractive landscape some people may picture when they hear the term, xeriscaped, landscapes can be both beautiful and water efficient. Xeriscaping is an excellent alternative to a "traditional" landscape, makes wise use of our water supply, and helps keep your water bills reasonable.

Whether planning a new landscape or renovating an old one, following these principles will help you save water and achieve your gardening goals.

Plan and design comprehensively. When making plans for your garden, think about how you use your yard. Do you entertain guests, need a place for children to play, want to block an ugly view? Once you have determined your needs, consider the view, the slope, sun exposure, placement of structures, existing vegetation, and the soils of the area. Create a plan deciding where things will be and when different areas will be done; Landscapes are often installed in phases.

Create practical turf areas. Lush green lawns can be beautiful, but they are one of the largest consumers of water in a landscape. Reducing turf areas or locating them at the bottom of slopes where they collect runoff and have proper drainage can significantly reduce water use. This does not mean all turf areas should be eliminated. By selecting water efficient varieties and properly locating turf, it can still play an important function in the landscape.

Use water-efficient plants. A plant list is included inside this handout. Gardening books and your local nursery are other good sources for plant suggestions. Plants native to your local area are often well adapted to arid conditions and are also good garden candidates.

Water efficiently with properly designed irrigation systems. The irrigation system should be well planned and managed. Drip or trickle irrigation systems apply the water where it does the most good: directly to the soil. This reduces evaporation and and saves you time now spent watering by hand. Not all plants need the same amount of water. Group plants with like water needs together. Also, irrigation needs change with the season and the weather. Water needs vary with plant variety, soil conditions, temperature and rainfall. Needs also change as plants mature.

Use organic mulches to reduce evaporation. Mulches minimize evaporation, reduce weed growth, slow erosion, and help prevent soil temperature fluctuations. When applied at a depth of 3-6 inches, mulches can be one key to a successful water efficient landscape.

Practice appropriate maintenance. The quality and efficiency of the xeriscape will be best maintained through proper pruning, weeding, and attention to the irrigation system.

Plant List

Here are a few examples of water efficient plants. Using such plants in your landscape could help improve water use efficiency.

Check with a local nursery to see which plants are available in your area.

Remember to also consider the overall look of your landscape before deciding on which plants to use.

Groundcovers

Juniperus conferta
shore juniper

Helianthemum
sunrose

Cotoneaster dammeri
bearberry cotoneaster

Hypericum calycinum
Saint Johnswort

Ceanothus, prostrate forms
creeping wild lilac

Verbena tenuisecta
moss verbena

Baccharis pilularis, dwarf forms
dwarf coyote brush

Juniperus horizontalis ‘Bar Harbor’
Bar Harbor juniper

Osteospermum
freeway daisy, creeping African daisy

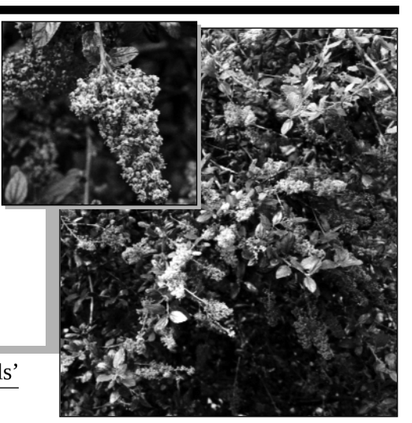
Aptenia cordifolia × *Platythyra haeckeliana*
red apple ice plant, hearts & flowers ice plant

Arctostaphylos, creeping selections
manzanita

Rosmarinus officinalis ‘Prostratus’and ‘Renzels’
dwarf rosemary

Teucrium chamaedrys ‘Nanum’
creeping wall germander

Mahonia aquifolium ‘Compacta’ [synonym *Berberis aquifolium* ‘Compactum’]
dwarf Oregon grape



Shrubs

Arctostaphylos
manzanita

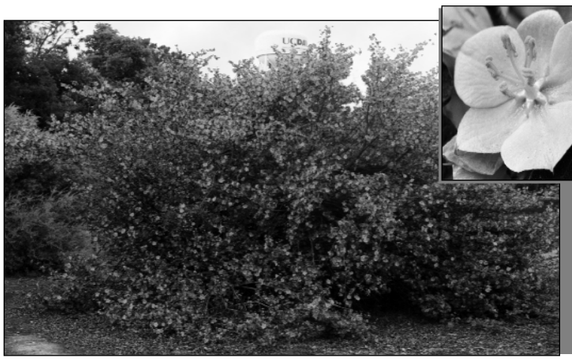
Rosa
roses

Pyracantha
firethorn

Syringa vulgaris
common lilac

Cistus
rockroses

Arbutus unedo
strawberry tree



Escallonia bifida [synonym *E. montevidensis*]
white escallonia

Feijoa sellowiana [synonym *Acca sellowiana*]
pineapple guava

Thuja orientalis & T. occidentalis, shrub forms
shrub arborvitae

Nerium oleander
oleander

Cercis occidentalis
western redbud

Cotinus coggygria
smoke tree

Nandina domestica
heavenly bamboo

Punica granatum
pomegranate

Photinia × *fraseri*
hybrid photinia

Pittosporum tobira
tobira, Japanese mock-orange

Fremontodendron californicum
common flannel bush

Grevillea lavandulacea
lavender-leaf grevillea

Carpenteria californica
bush anemone

Leucophyllum frutescens
Texas-sage

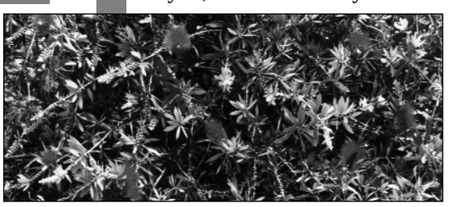
Callistemon citrinus
lemon bottlebrush

Rhaphiolepis indica
Indian hawthorn

Symphoricarpos albus
common snowberry

Lonicera fragrantissima
winter honeysuckle

Heteromeles arbutifolia
toyon, Christmas berry



Perennials

Eschscholzia californica
California poppy

Achillea filipendulina
fernleaf yarrow

Agapanthus ‘Peter Pan’
dwarf lily-of-the-Nile

Armeria
thrift, sea pink

Diascia cordata
twinspur

Dietes vegeta
fortnight lily

Eriogonum umbellatum
sulfur flower

Hemerocallis
daylily

Penstemon
beard tongue

Epilobium canum [synonym *Zauschneria*]
California fuchsia

Trees

Evergreen Conifers

Calocedrus decurrens
incense cedar

Cedrus deodara
deodar cedar

Pinus canariensis
Canary Islands pine

Pinus contorta
shore pine

Broadleaved Evergreens

Rhus lancea
African sumac

Casuarina cunninghamiana
beefwood

Quercus ilex
holly oak

Quercus suber
cork oak

Quercus agrifolia
coast live oak

Laurus nobilis
Grecian laurel

Maytenus boaria
mayten tree

Prunus ilicifolia
hollyleaf cherry

Xylosma congestum
xylosma

Deciduous

Quercus lobata
valley oak

Acer truncatum
Shantung maple

Zelkova serrata
Japanese zelkova

Pistacia chinensis
Chinese pistache

Celtis occidentalis
common hackberry

Quercus douglasii
blue oak

Sapium sebiferum
Chinese tallow tree

Robinia × *ambigua* ‘idahoensis’
Idaho locust

Gymnocladus dioica
Kentucky coffee-tree

Sophora japonica
Japanese pagoda tree

Koelreuteria paniculata
goldenrain tree

Lagerstroemia indica & hybrids
crape myrtle